285 The art of basketry, however, is exercised primarily to produce woven containers. These serve many purposes and come in all shapes and sizes from large wicker containers used to protect chicks against birds of prey and small wicker baskets for collecting refuse to baskets of plaited grass for carrying millet, rice, and most other goods. Some baskets are made with greater care, decorated with designs made by mixing dyed grasses and thin leather strips and edged with cowries.

[462] Only the men do basketry, and only they work with leather; some
281 of them make leather objects which are almost artistic and very well sewn. Unfortunately the natives do not know how to tan skins properly, and their leather has no strength. The hide is simply stretched out and dried by the sun; sometimes it is briefly immersed in water containing tamarind bark. The hair is removed by pouring hot water onto the skin and then scraping it off with a knife. To make it softer, the skin is moved back and forth over a stake planted in the ground and slightly sharpened at the tip, or it is simply crumpled /57/ between the hands. When it has been softened, it is stretched once more to dry in the sun, held with small wooden pegs driven into the [386] ground. It may be dyed red, green, or black with special herbs.

Some men make knife or saber sheaths; others specialize in the long gaiters which are tied to the belt and worn by every horseman in full regalia; still others make saddle rugs stuffed with kapok or cotton and decorated with designs. They also make the various parts of the harness: the leather strip which runs across the horse's chest, and the
294 large rug which covers its rump. Leather is also used to make all kinds
281 of footgear, from the mere piece of hide held to the feet by leather strips running between the big and second toes and all round the foot, to the Turkish-type slipper and the ornamented boots with spurs attached which are a natural complement to the long gaiters. Some of the shoemakers are truly skillful and could make quite satisfactory shoes if they had lasts and especially if they had better leather.

281 Hide is also used in the manufacture of belts adorned with cowries, pouches, amulets, bags which are sometimes nicely adorned, etc. The designs are usually made as follows: small leather strips of various colors are sewn onto a skin of solid color which serves as a base; more rarely, as in Morocco, the top layer of skin is removed.

462 The above-mentioned industries are performed exclusively by men, and any male individual may practice them. The preparation of gun powder and tobacco is also male work. The industries listed below,

285 294 435 2. Similar but smaller hats, worth from 1,000 to 1,500 cowries.

/529/ 3. Round straw hats with wide brims, mentioned above. These are worth 1,700 cowries.

285 294 241 All the leather parts on those hats are added by the shoemaker. We have already mentioned that our hat makers are not exclusively manufacturers, that they also till the soil. It must be added that the latter activity nets them more than their trade. The man I mentioned cultivates a field of small millet and one of large red millet in the bush. He also grows maize, peanuts, and underground peas around his soukala. He owns neither large nor small livestock, but only chickens.

285 294 592 In his soukala he has two wives, four children, two married brothers who have one wife apiece but no children, and two unmarried brothers, as well as a father. They all make hats.

He lives at Saponé, where there are many hat manufacturers.

282 294 [564] After straw work, let us mention leatherwork.

Mossi shoemakers do not form a caste. Anyone who wants to may marry among them, and anyone who wishes to do so may exercise their trade.

[592] As an example, here is Kinoga Kologo, a Mossi, and the head of a soukala. He lives with two wives, two children, and an unmarried brother. His soukala consists of three huts.

His tools are as follows:

282 294 413 1. The pongo, a kind of broad little knife with a flaring blade hafted to a very short handle. It is used to cut hide.

2. The gansiouba, a wooden knife used to scrape and rub hides, clean them and smooth them.

3. The désara, a small tool with a wooden handle and a curved iron stem. It is used red hot to trace designs on hides.

4. The pime, a small awl used to sew hides.

5. The large tirisiga. This is an iron seal used to imprint hides with small circles.

6. The small tirisiga. This is a smaller seal, /530/ an iron rod whose tip makes a very tiny seal.

282 294 435 As among nearly all Blacks, the Mossi shoemaker is his own tanner. He buys sheepskins and goatskins at market (small ones

282 294 435 sell for 200 cowries, large ones for 400). He leaves them to soak in a large canari with yogré seeds for twelve hours. Then he removes the hair by hand, washes the skin thoroughly, and places it again in a canari with seeds of pélanaga (a tree that grows in the bush). He washes and rubs the hide with these seeds. Then he leaves it to dry in the sun after covering it with butter, real butter rather than karité butter. The skin may then be used to make various items.

Kinoga also buys cowhide at market to make sandals. One cowhide is worth 3,000 cowries. He puts it in a large canari where he leaves it soaking for three days, then he takes it out, removes the hair with a knife, and strikes the skin with a small stick to soften it. Whatever amount of leather is needed to make sandals is then removed from the hide, which is used up gradually as the need arises.

The shoemaker's tools are made by the blacksmith. These tools are worth 100 cowries apiece, except for the awl that is worth 20 and the wooden knife that is made by the shoemaker himself and worth 50. All of the shoemaker's tools taken together are thus worth 470 cowries, or only 50 centimes.

Our shoemaker makes the following items:

1. Sandals, first and foremost. The most expensive ones are worth 2,500 cowries a pair, the less expensive ones 1,500 cowries.

2. Leather grigris, bracelets, pouches, etc. The pouches are worth 100 cowries, the bracelets 50. He only makes them on order. It must be said that other shoemakers stock them up beforehand and have them taken to market.

Of course, what the shoemaker prepares is the physical part of the grigri, its outer covering. It is not he who gives the grigri its power, its soul.

3. Kinoga does not make satchels, goatskin bags, but other shoemakers do.

[415] /531/ There are goatskins used to store millet. Large ones are worth 1 franc and small ones 0.50 franc. Then, there are goatskins used to hold water. They are worth from 0.30 to 1 franc. Finally, there are small goatskins used as purses or coin bags and worth 0.20 franc.

[372] 4. Shoemakers also make leather cases for strike-a-light steel (200 cowries) and for needles (50 cowries). Both strike-a-light steel
[326] and needles are made by blacksmiths.

282 294 435 and needles are made by blacksmiths. A strike-a-light steel is worth 200 cowries.

5. They make sheaths for knives and swords. Knife sheaths are worth 200 cowries, sword sheaths 3,000.

6. Bridles and saddles. Saddles are worth 3,000 cowries, bridles 5,000.

Shoemakers also work with deerskin and leopardskin. They adorn Mossi truncheons or clubs with leopardskin. They also adorn spears with it. The leopardskin is provided by the customer. The shoemaker does not purchase it directly.

Leopardskin is sold at market in small pieces worth 100 cowries. A large leopardskin is worth 10 francs, a small one 7 francs.

Crocodile skin is also used by shoemakers. People who have killed a crocodile go and sell its skin at market, or else someone purchases the skin from the hunter and retails it at market. The skin of a small crocodile (hardly any but these are to be found in Mossi territory, owing to the scarcity of water) is worth 1,000 cowries. People who wish the shoemaker to work one of these skins purchase it at market and take it to him.

282 294 There are no hippopotamus skins in Mossi territory, because water is scarce and watercourses are small. As for elephant skin, it is too tough to be worked and remains unused.

282 294 241 The shoemaker I am describing exercises his trade only during the dry season. During the rainy season he tills the soil, and this nets him more than his trade. /532/ The same thing applies, incidentally, to all Mossi shoemakers. During the winter season, our man cultivates a field of small millet and one of large red millet, a small rice field, and a little maize around his soukala. He plants beans in his two millet fields. He owns neither large nor small livestock, not even a chicken or a dog.

There are no makers of headcrests among the Mossi, and the Boussouma chief I questioned about it told me there never were any.

286 Let us now proceed to the cotton industry, and study in turn the weaver's, tailor's and dyer's trades.

The Mossi weaver (soulouga) is a weaver-cultivator. He tills the soil during the rainy season and exercises his trade during the dry season. In fact he is primarily a cultivator, for cultivation rather than weaving comes first and foremost to him.